**EDUCATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION IN THE MUSLIM WORLD: CHALLENGE BEFORE THE**

EDUCATIONALPPLANNER

Khurshid Ahmad

The Muslim world is presently in the midst of one of the most critical phases of its history. It has gradually emerged from the long spell of western political domination. Forty six independent Muslim states now sit in the UN General Assembly of whom thirty eight have organized themselves into a loose block under the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers with a permanent Secretariat at Jeddah (established May, 1971). Of about 900 million Muslims in the world, 600 million live in a geographically contiguous landscape from North-West Africa through Central and East Africa and West Asia into the very heart of Central Asia melting about twenty per cent of total land area of the world. (See Map). Economically, although underdeveloped industrially, it possesses rich mineral and energy resources. Recent shifts in the economic balance of power have made the position of the Muslim world much stronger vis-a-vis the rest of the world, The Muslim world is as much beset with tensions and stresses as any other part of the world, yet geographic compactness, religion, unity, common history and convergence of basic socio- economic interests makes the Muslim world a force to be reckoned with. The present mood of the Muslim world can be described as that of resilience, of a rediscovery of its own tradition with a view to regain in the world a position commensurate with its historic entity.

Of all the problems that confront the Muslim world today, the educational problem is the most challenging. The future of the Muslim world may very much depend upon the way if responds to this Challenge

Education performs at least two basic functions in any society: it is a vehicle for the preservation, continuity and communication of the cultural heritage, traditional values and social and national ideals and norms of a people; and it is a tool for change, innovation and development/nu-of-the word including becoming a major means through which new knowledge and skills are discovered, developed and imparted to the people and trained manpower produced to meet the demands of socio-economic change. These twin roles of education are extremely important cue but the implications of the two are not always in harmony with each to protest How to reconcile these two roles towards a new and higher another level of convergence is the main concern of the modern educationist in the world of Islam build with his relations

Islam has been the most decisive factor in/long and cheered history of the Muslim world. Islam's concern is as much with building man's relationship wimbles with other men and worldly institutions Its chief characteristic faces in integrating the moral and the spiritual with the secular and the mundane aspects of life, with the result that the two become two sides of the same coin. Islam also claims to be a complete way of life, dealing with all aspects of man's life, moral, spiritual, personal, social, political, economic, national and international. In this scheme of things, education occupies a unique position, as it is the main vehicle through which the desired change is expected to be produced. Prophet Muhammad, (peace be upon him) claimed that he had been sent as an educator. He also said that acquisition of knowledge has been made obligatory on every Muslim. Under this inspiration Muslims developed an efficient and dynamic system of education during the -3-

early phases of their career. The system grew in size, stature, variety and richness with the passage of time and influenced growth of education in other parts of the world (See: Nakosteen, M., History of Islamic Origins of Western Education A.D. 800-1350, Colorado: University of Colorado Press).

Muslim education, after a long and distinguished career extending over a thousand years, began to show signs of weakness and stagnation. Over the last three centuries, it was, generally speaking, unable to Sparkle & meeting or challenges the best beset in must generate forces of creativity The system became over-occupied with the preservation of the Intellectual and cultural tradition and ignored the challenges that came from the explosion of new learning and technology in the West. The price for this neglect had to be paid. In the new encounter with the West, the Muslim world succumbed to the more powerful forces of, West. Consequent's the long night of colonial rule followed. During this period the traditional educational system shrank gradually and settled to confine itself to religious education only. This religious education endeavored to preserve Islamic traditional bearing and also produced religious functionaries of the society, but it did not concern itself with the overall needs of the society, particularly modern knowledge and technology this gap was filled by the new system of education introduced by the Western colonial rulers. A number of influences went into the making of this new system more important of them ware administration and Christian missionary organizations.

The new administrators were interested in producing a new class of people who could, on the one hand, act as intermediaries between the foreign rulers and the people when they ruled, and on the other a cadre of efficient local functionaries for the colonial system.

The primary interest of the missionaries was to wear the people away from there rottninus tradition and win then over to Christianity and the Western culture. The new educational pattern was an imitation of the educational pyramid developed in nineteenth century Europe: primary, secondary and university education, with a dominant bias towards literary and cultural subjects. The system showed no concern for the cultural and ideological context of the Muslim society and tried to super-impose secular education on all those who came to the portals of the new education primarily with a view to scratch out a place for themselves in the new order of Love things. The traditional and the modern systems/existed as two unrelated systems each catering for a certain group of people and mistrial none taking care of the total perspective of the society and its cultural and technological needs.

In the post-colonial era the modern secular system of education became the starting point for new educational development. Over the last three decades significant quantitative expansion of modern education has taken place, with the establishment of new schools, colleges and universities and exponential increase in the number of students and teachers at all levels. No fundamental qualitative change has, however, taken place with a view to re-integrate the two roles of education, selective numen sheet which were being taken care of in a highly defective way, by two mutually exclusive systems the traditional and the modern. Some declarations of intent have been made for this integration (See: Proceedings of the First Educational Conference of Pakistan (1947) and The Covenant of Arab Cultural Unity Second Conference of Arab Ministers of Education has been achieved towards this end. (1964) but little progress has been achieved towards this end,-

The basic problem that confronts the educational planner does not merely relate to the quantitative expansion of education, although this too is an important dimension in view of the widespread illiteracy (ranging between 40 and 80 per cent of the population) and lack of proper educational facilities for the school age population (about fifty per cent lack any schooling at all) as also dearth of skilled manpower required for efficient industrial development. The major problem emerges from the crisis in education produced by the alienation of the people from the ethos of the new education. It has failed to take roots in the religion cultural tradition of the people and as such remained an alien inroad into the society. Very little thought has been given to the ideals and values of education and their relationship with the entire corpus of education and its institutional paraphernalia. Insensitivity to these aspects of education has resulted in the present crisis of education where expansion of the system is adding to its discontents and frustrations.

The Western educational model has not been successful in the Muslim world as also in most of the countries of the third world. It has failed to outgrow its own historical prototype, with literary and humanistic bias, secular approach, particularism and elitism being some of the significant elements. The liberal tradition that chaperoned this system is now threatened in the Western countries themselves. The ideological challenge came from movements like Communism, National Socialism and Education for Democracy. There is an increasing awareness among the Muslim educationists as also among a number of Western educationists that the system suffers from inter alia the following weakness:

(1) Education has failed to develop social ideals among the students. Lack of commitment to ideals impairs the spirit of dedication, effort and sacrifice in the educated.

11) (It has also failed to instill moral values in the hearts and souls of the new generation, charecka- buildup.

(111) Education in science and technology has failed to keep pace with the increasing demands of the modern society. Not only the technological content is less than what is required, even the supply of scientists, engineers falls and other highly skilled manpower leach short of national and international needs.

(iv) Education lacks an integrating principle. There is over-departmentalization of knowledge, with the result that the whole body of knowledge is not properly integrated within a consistent whole.

Along with these aspects the Muslim educationist is worried over the relatedness of modern education with the religion cultural context of the Muslim society. His problem, therefore, is one of restructuring the entire educational milieu in such a way that it could cater for the ideological as well as the technological needs of the growing Muslim society.